

Identify and Reduce Exposure to Risk Factors

To improve control of asthma and reduce medication needs, patients should take steps to avoid the risk factors that cause their asthma symptoms (Table 3). However, many asthma patients react to multiple factors that are ubiquitous in the environment, and avoiding some of these factors completely is nearly impossible. Thus, medications to maintain asthma control have an important role because patients are often less sensitive to these risk factors when their asthma is under control.

Table 3. Strategies for Avoiding Common Allergens and Pollutants

Avoidance measures that improve control of asthma and reduce medication needs:

- **Tobacco smoke:** Stay away from tobacco smoke. Parents and caregivers should not smoke.
- **Drugs, foods, and additives:** Avoid if they are known to cause symptoms.

Reasonable avoidance measures that can be recommended but have not been shown to have clinical benefit:

- **House dust mites:** Wash bed linens and blankets weekly in hot water and dry in a hot dryer or the sun. Encase pillows and mattresses in air-tight covers. Replace carpets with hard flooring, especially in sleeping rooms. (If possible, use vacuum cleaner with filters. Use acaricides or tannic acid to kill mites—but make sure the patient is not at home when the treatment occurs.)
- **Animals with fur:** Use air filters. (Remove animals from the home, or at least from the sleeping area. Wash the pet.)
- **Cockroaches:** Clean the home thoroughly and often. Use pesticide spray—but make sure the patient is not at home when spraying occurs.
- **Outdoor pollens and mold:** Close windows and doors and remain indoors when pollen and mold counts are highest.
- **Indoor mold:** Reduce dampness in the home; clean any damp areas frequently.